

THE KIND OF COLLEGE.

Christian parents frequently discover, to their disappointment and grief, that their sons and daughters who have been sent to prominent colleges at great expense, are returning home with their religious beliefs entirely unsettled or positively on the side of skepticism. In the class room or in the pretentious intellectual atmosphere of the college or university, cherished religious beliefs have been opposed by radical scientific assumptions, or have been subjected to open irrational ridicule, and as a consequence the faith of the youthful mind has been shaken.

We frequently hear, as an apology for such an attitude toward our traditional faith (we use the word traditional advisedly) that it must stand on its merit and not fear the search-light of modern learning. To this we readily assent, with two provisos. The one is that the traditional faith, which by its fruits has proven its title to confidence, must stand unimpaired and unmoved until, by an intelligible demonstration, it has been proven to be erroneous. Such proof against evangelical religion, the old-time Gospel, has never been furnished. And as an evidence of this, the leading men of learning in all branches of scholarship and the leading men of character pay their reverent tribute to the Christian faith.

Another requirement, which we believe is reasonable and unassailable, is that skeptical instructors shall not demolish the spiritual structure of faith and hope, even though it be but intellectually cherished by their pupils, unless they can furnish something better in its stead. To do so is intellectual vandalism. It is unscientific and unscholarly in the last degree. The Northmen wrecked the civilization of Southern Europe to supplant it with nothing better than their inherited savagery. Historians of all ages condemn the vandalism. Truth is progressive. It is elevating. Its tendency is to refine. It nourishes the finer fibre of our being. It incites to ever higher ideals. Its righteous tendency is to exalt the nobler qualities of our nature. It leads upward as it leads onward. The logical tendency of learning is toward emphasizing the spiritual in man. The course of its progress is unflinching in the direction of immortality. The untrammelled mind resists the suggestion that life simply means a brief existence and then vanishing like a vapor. Such a refuge may attract a sordid nature, but not a noble one. The prospect of endless progress in the perception of truth and the realization of possible attainment allures the well-balanced and rational mind. Such a mind has a right to rebuke and denounce agnosticism in its own chosen strongholds.

The question, then, what kind of a college, is paramount. Will our boys and girls be under the tuition of speculative adventurers intent on some new species of ignoble notoriety? Or will they receive instruction from reverent, conscientious and capable men and women, who bring to the class room the furniture of an adequate and mature scholarship, and also the example of a refined and ennobled life, having a clearer and completer grasp of truth because of reverence for and faith in Him who is its author?

M.

THE CHURCH OPPORTUNIST.

One of the commonest products of the times is the opportunist. He is the man who seeks to accommodate himself to the conditions about him rather than to make and shape those conditions. He originates nothing. He is but the clay between the stones of the world's masonry. He contributes nothing to the sum total of the world's knowledge, effort, or results. He seeks position, place, wealth, and success entirely from his surroundings. He is not positive. In the nature of the case he can not be. And take it all in all, he is the most ephemeral of the world's creations. Like the badly tempered mortar in which the stones are bedded, he crumbles in the crush or fire of the times that try men's souls.

There are religious and Church opportunists. They are the people who are always talking about our adjusting ourselves to the times, of the "spirit of the age," of the conditions in which we live, who roll as a sweet morsel under their tongue that hackneyed phrase, "we face conditions, not a theory." They are the people who forget that conditions are themselves a product, and that God has given his people power to make conditions. They are the people who think that there is "progress in truth," forgetting the difference between the apprehension of truth and the truth itself. They are the people who misinterpret the adaptability of the Word by conveniently making it fit in with their own notions and interpretation. They are the people who make hasty generalizations, being led astray by temporary conditions and passing incidents, instead of loyally adhering to the great, unchanging, fundamental principles of revelation. They substitute their surroundings for God.

From its nature opportunism is changeful. It has no fixed principles except that of accommodation, which may hardly be called a principle so much as a method. It lacks certitude. It takes on the color of its surroundings altogether. If they change it changes. When a given condition ceases to be, its hands are empty until it finds a new setting. In every way it is contrary to the certainty, the permanence, the fruitfulness of the Gospel plan and the divine method. Opportunity is to be seized and used, and is God's gift to us for that purpose, not that we may simply fit ourselves into it.

The churches of Scotland in the last fortnight have lost several of their most valuable leaders. Principal Marshall Lang, of Aberdeen, has long been a scholarly and intellectual minister of the Kirk of Scotland; his son, Cormo Gordon Lang, is in the Anglican Church and has become Archbishop of York. Dr. Archibald Scott, minister of St. George's, Edinburgh, also a distinguished minister of the Kirk, and Dr. Marcus Dods newly elected principal of the Free Church College, Edinburgh, is more widely known in this country. Of him Dr. Robertson Nicoll says: "He was the best friend and the most Christ-like man I have ever known. He was in his daily work and conversation a living evidence of Christianity. There were many who have never lost their joyful confidence in Christ, and they owe this to him as much as to any."